

Prominent Ministers in Southern Baptist Convention



SOME OF LEADERS OF CONVENTION IN EARLY DAYS

Records Contain Many Names Well Known to Church Workers.

BY REV. J. WILLIAM JONES, D. D.

HAVE been asked to write something of the men who were the leaders of the Southern Baptist Convention in earlier days.

I first attended a meeting of the convention at Russellville, Ky., in May, 1866, and since that day have missed only two or three sessions of the body.

Among the leaders in ante-bellum days were Dr. Richard Fuller, of Baltimore; Dr. Basil Manly, of Alabama; Dr. P. H. Mell and Dr. H. H. Tucker, of Georgia; Dr. W. M. Crawford, of Kentucky; Dr. R. B. C. Howell, of Tennessee; Dr. James B. Taylor, Dr. J. B. Jeter and Dr. A. M. Poindexter, of Virginia; Dr. J. C. Furman, Dr. Richard Furman, Dr. E. T. Winkler and Dr. J. B. Boyce, of South Carolina; Dr. W. C. Buell, of Mississippi; Dr. M. T. Sumner and Dr. W. H. McIntosh, of Alabama; Dr. S. L. Helm, Dr. J. M. Pendleton, Dr. S. H. Ford, of Kentucky; Dr. Williams of Missouri; Dr. J. W. M. Williams, of Baltimore; Dr. Rufus Burleson, Dr. W. C. Crandall and Dr. B. H. Carroll, of Texas, and others too numerous to mention. Many of these leaders had passed away in 1866, but some of them still lingered.

Presiding Officer.

Dr. P. H. Mell, chancellor of the University of Georgia, was for many years president of the convention, and was one of the best parliamentarians and most superb presiding officers whom I ever saw. His book on "Parliamentary Practice" has long been a standard. He combined in a high degree firmness and courtesy, and it was worth going a long

way to see the uniform good order which he preserved in this large body, coming from every State in the South and frequently differing widely in their views.

If one differed from him in any ruling he made he would say in the most courteous way: "This is the opinion of the chair, but the chair is not infallible, and I will take that you will appeal to the house, if you take it as no discourtesy if the house should reverse my decision."

But he was a bold man indeed who should appeal from a decision of "old Pat," as we affectionately called him, for the conventional ways sustained his decisions by an overwhelming vote.

During a very animated debate once, a brother "rose to a point of order," and President Mell promptly replied, "The chair rules that it is not a point, but a range before the house; and the brethren have ranged."

He always ruled political matter out of order, and suppressed any tendency to applause, ruling that "applause is decidedly out of order in a religious body."

Thus the miserable habit of applause, which had converted so many of the Northern religious bodies into noisy mobs, was kept out of the Southern Baptist Convention as long as President Mell wielded the gavel.

Habit of Applause.

Some of us greatly regret that, despite a by-law against it, the vicious habit of applause occasionally in these later days creeps into meetings of the convention.

Rev. Dr. Richard Fuller, of Baltimore,

was always a great power in the convention as a preacher and a speaker. He sometimes made a failure, but when at his best he swept the assembly with his wonderful power as an orator.

I remember that when the convention met at Macon, Ga., in 1869, Dr. Fuller spoke on the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, which had lost all of its endowment by the results of the war, and was in great financial straits. It

was arranged that after Dr. Fuller's speech, Dr. J. L. M. Curry was to make an appeal and then Dr. Boyce, the president of the seminary, was to take a collection. But Dr. Fuller so captivated and thrilled the convention by his keen wit, mirth-provoking humor, strong arguments and tender pathos that when he was half through Dr. Curry went to Dr. Boyce and whispered: "When Fuller gets through take your collection. Not a word more from me or any one else."

Accordingly, Dr. Boyce made one of the most notable collections ever taken in a religious body. Carried away by Fuller's eloquence, the brethren gave with most self-sacrificing liberality. And that collection saved the seminary.

Electrified Crowd.

Upon another occasion, when the convention met in Charleston, S. C., in May, 1875, Dr. Fuller made a great speech on missions, which electrified the large crowd who heard him. We had just heard of the death of Dr. A. M. Poindexter, to whom Dr. Fuller was greatly attached, and when speaking of the spread of the gospel and the angel who is spoken of in Revelation as flying abroad to carry it, he exclaimed: "Oh, angel, thy faster! thy faster! Souls are perishing while thou dost linger. And if thou canst not fly faster, then commit thy message to Poindexter's spirit, for he bears by sweet and blessed experience as thou canst never know the joy and happiness of redeeming love!"

Dr. J. L. M. Curry was one of our most gifted orators, and made great speeches at various meetings of the convention, but, perhaps, the most effective one he ever made was at the session of the convention in St. Louis in 1871, when he spoke on the mission to Italy, and so stirred the audience that, though it was not intended to take a collection, there was a spontaneous and very large collection box on the table.

Dr. A. M. Poindexter, long one of the secretaries of the foreign mission board, was one of the ablest men in the convention, and one of the most powerful debaters on the floor. In six speeches he stirred and greatly moved his hearers, and a young man once said to me:

"When I hear Poindexter speak I feel like starting to China as a missionary before breakfast the next morning."

As the result of one of his sermons in Charlottesville four students of the University determined to be foreign missionaries.

Others Well Known.

Dr. James B. Taylor, the lifelong secretary of the foreign mission board, was one of the most influential and useful members of the convention. He did not often take the platform, but his wise management, sanctified common sense, consecrated zeal and wonderful tact told largely, not only for the great cause he specially represented, but for all of the interests of the convention.

Rev. Dr. John A. Broadus, of the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, was not only our ripe scholar, great teacher and prince of preachers, but one of the most influential leaders of the convention.

Upon one occasion, when a great question was before the body on which there was wide difference of opinion and many of our ablest men had prepared speeches which they were anxious to get off, and there were evidences of considerable excitement, Dr. Broadus

got the floor and in a few minutes earnestly appealed to the convention not to discuss the matter further, but come to a "vote—that our minds were made up how we would vote, and could not be changed by the logic or the eloquence of brethren anxious to speak; that we would only consume precious time by prolonging the debate, and he earnestly appealed to the convention to quit talking and vote. Instantly there were cries of "Vote!" "Vote!" all over the convention, and even those who were most anxious to speak, among them an able brother whose speech was already in type in one of the leading papers of his city, joined in the cry, and the vote was at once taken. Dr. Broadus always drew packed houses to hear him preach, and his simple, tender, effective gospel messages linger still in the hearts and memories and lives of many of his auditors.

Remarkable Speech.

The most affecting speech I ever heard from him or any one else was made by Dr. Broadus in Washington, D. C., before the Northern Baptist annuals. They granted him ten minutes to speak on the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, and he came forward, watch in hand, and said: "You give me ten minutes, brethren. I shall only consume nine and a half." He packed into that nine and a half minutes the origin, history and peculiar organization of the seminary—"the university free

system" applied to a theological seminary—and concluded by saying: "We were prospecting and had the beginning of an ample endowment when that dreadful war came, in which we of the South lost so much that we loved and cherished, and our endowment was swept away, and in the impoverished condition of our people it seemed impossible to raise another endowment, and the assembly seemed dead. But several of us got together and wept over it and prayed over it, and determined that if we lived the seminary should live. And we are living yet and struggling to keep the seminary alive. Now I do not, of course, propose to interrupt your own work by asking for a collection, but if individuals should want to help this important institution they can see me privately. And I do remember, brethren, that when there had been a serious misunderstanding between the Gentile converts and those of Juden, Paul thought that it would very greatly promote peace and good will for the Gentiles to send up a good round collection for the poor saints at Jerusalem."

There was rapturous and prolonged applause, and Dr. Broadus was forced to come to the front again, when he quietly said: "I declare, brethren, I do not know what all of this fuss means unless it means that you want to give the seminary some money."

A prominent layman sprang to his feet and said: "That is just what we do mean. I propose that here and now we raise \$12,500, which I understand, will pay one of the professors a moderate salary for five years. We will not say now which one it shall be."

No sooner said than done, and in the shortest time the amount called for was raised. Dr. Broadus in those dark days lived on a miserly pittance and stood at his post in the seminary when he was offered large salaries and great inducements to go elsewhere, and more by his labors and those of President James P. Boyce than from any other cause the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary was moved to Louisville, Ky., where it has now beautiful buildings, a large endowment, a superb library and the largest number of students of any purely theological seminary in the country.

When President Boyce died Dr. Broadus became president of the seminary and developed talents for that position far beyond the most sanguine expectations of his friends and admirers who knew him as scholar, theologian, teacher and preacher, but did not know his executive ability.

There was the deepest sorrow among

all classes when Dr. Broadus died, and grave fears were expressed that the seminary could not survive it, but he was succeeded in the presidency by that accomplished scholar, sound theologian and able executive officer, Dr. W. H. Whitsitt, and he ran the number of students up higher than it had ever reached before.

Rev. Dr. James P. Boyce, the real leader and first president of the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, comes naturally before us as we mention Broadus, for they were indeed true yokefellows, par nobis fratrum, in their work.

Dr. Boyce was certainly one of the leaders of the convention. Able in debate, fearless in the expression and defense of his opinions, a genial gentleman and a loving brother, he was wisely honored and loved.

The son of a wealthy merchant in Charleston, he inherited great financial ability which he used for the advantage of the seminary and other denominational enterprises.

He was himself a princely giver, and had a talent for inducing others to give. He had one of the largest and best selected private libraries to be found anywhere. He gave professors and students free access to his books, and left a provision in his will that his library should be turned over to the seminary he loved so well and served so faithfully.

He was for some years president of the convention, and presided with dignity, impartiality, firmness and courtesy. He had large influence, and could carry in the convention almost any measure he favored.

Dr. J. B. Jeter, of Virginia, was one of the ablest and most influential leaders of the convention. Many stories were told of his absentmindedness and peculiarities, but nothing ever reflected in the least upon his high character or consecrated life, which he devoted to the service of the Master and the interests of the convention and the denomination. A devoted and useful pastor, he served for a long time the First Baptist Church and then the Grace Street Baptist Church, of this city.

In later life he was associated with Rev. Dr. A. E. Dickinson in owning and editing the Religious Herald, of this city, and he was noted for his pure English, his fair treatment of his opponents, his great conservatism and his power as an elder.

Some Others.

But this paper is already too long, and I have not space to speak of many of our other leaders, such as Dr. Thelius Gracchus Jones, of Norfolk, whose graceful oratory so charmed his auditors; Dr. J. L. Burrows, of Richmond, the popular

FEW OBJECTED WHEN "OLD PAT" WAS IN CHAIR

Dr. Mell's Book on Parliamentary Practice is Baptist Standard.

preacher and firm adherent of the cause and interests of the South, though Northern born and educated; Dr. H. A. Turner, the accomplished secretary of the foreign mission board and high-toned Christian gentleman; Dr. J. B. Hawthorne, of Alabama, who began to take prominent part in the affairs of the convention soon after the war, and has been honored and loved as one of the most eloquent speakers and influential members of the body; Dr. L. T. Tichenor, of Atlanta, the able secretary of the home mission board, the "old man eloquent" of the convention; Dr. J. B. Gamble, of Texas, the witty and successful practical worker; Dr. B. H. Carroll, of Texas, one of the ablest men of his day; Judge Haralson, of Alabama, for some time the popular president of the convention; Governor Northern, of Georgia, who was a most successful president and efficient worker; Governor James P. Eagle, of Arkansas, for several years president of the convention and a man of influence, especially in his State; and many of the younger men who came to the front some years ago, and are now among our most useful leaders, who have made the Southern Baptist Convention of to-day a body of great influence and power among evangelical Christians.

Natural Bridge

Virginia.

A MARVEL IN STONE.

Magnificent Scenery.

Modern Hotel.

Fine Livery.

Jamestown Exposition Excursion Tickets

Reading over the

CHESAPEAKE AND OHIO RY.

Good in either direction, via

NATURAL BRIDGE.

Stop-over on Through Tickets.

C. H. PAXTON, Manager,

Natural Bridge, Va.

THROUGH SLEEPERS TO NEW ORLEANS AND MEMPHIS,

VIA NORFOLK & WESTERN RAILWAY.

The Norfolk and Western Railway now operates through sleepers between Norfolk and Memphis on train No. 1, leaving Richmond 9:00 A. M. Through

sleeper to New Orleans on train No. 11, leaving Richmond 9:00 P. M.

.. Satisfaction Suit Sale..

Silk Gloves,
in champagne
and tan,
\$1.50

Long Lisle
Gloves,
an unusual
value,
50c

Mail Orders Given Prompt and Careful Attention.

Faulkner & Wariner Co. First and
Broad Streets.